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AN EVALUATION OF A READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
AT THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE LEVEL IN  
TERMS OF STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

by

THEODORE MURPHY ROLLINS

B. A. Montana State University, 1950

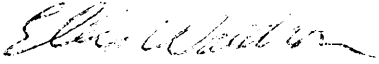
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1958

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. This paper describes a study-type reading, comprehension, and vocabulary improvement project which was undertaken to improve reading in a seventh and eighth grade class. The effectiveness of this program was measured in terms of (1) daily performance record of students using the special comprehension exercises; (2) student scores on three alternate forms of the Stanford Achievement Test, which were given the year before this project was undertaken and at the initiation and conclusion of this reading improvement program.

Importance of the problem. There were several reasons why a program of this type was thought to be of value: (1) past test scores showed a need for improvement in reading for many in this class; (2) many students in this class were also low in all other areas of achievement; (3) the high school teachers felt that many students dropped out of school largely because of lack of reading skills; (4) it was felt that reading improvement was necessary for many if they were to be successful in high school academic work.

It was noted that few of the students in the class studied made use of their dictionaries and had little desire to improve their vocabularies. Very few in the class enjoyed speaking or reading before their classmates. The majority read only a minimum of library books. Investigation showed that those who were poorest in arithmetic reasoning on tests were also lowest in word meaning and paragraph meaning.

Purpose of the problem. The purpose of this project was to

evaluate a special study type of reading comprehension and vocabulary building program in terms of the results obtained on Stanford Achievement Tests.

Delimitation of the problem. This study covered a period beginning March 18, 1957, to May 5, 1958. From the former date to January 21, 1958, excluding the three summer months, was the non-experimental period, approximately seven months duration. From January 17, 1958, to May 5, 1958, the experimental period was approximately a four month period. The reading results obtained for these two periods were compared to determine the effectiveness of the experimental period.



## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Review of the literature. The teaching of reading is generally agreed to be of utmost importance in the upper elementary grades. Authorities in the field state that schools sometimes fail to give proper attention to the building of reading skills, particularly at the junior high and high school levels.

Gray and Reese sum up the relationship of reading to other school subjects in the following quotation:

Reading is ultimately linked with every subject of the modern school curriculum. It is impossible to think of a child as good in geography and poor in reading. Most of what a child is supposed to learn, in social studies as in art, music, and literature, depends upon reading. This basic skill is a tool as well in solving arithmetic problems and in spelling and writing.<sup>1</sup>

Poor reading and failure in other school subjects go hand-in-hand. Gates says:

Reading is both the most important and the most troublesome subject in the elementary-school curriculum. It is most important since it is a tool the mastery of which is essential to the learning of nearly every other school subject. It is most troublesome since pupils fail in reading far more frequently than in any other elementary skills.<sup>2</sup>

Vocabulary building must be a part of any reading program if the student's progress is to be in keeping with his reading capacity.

---

<sup>1</sup>Lillian Gray and Dora Reese, Teaching Children to Read (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur I. Gates, The Improvement of Reading (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 1.

Dolch<sup>1</sup> points out that a student must be able and willing to use the dictionary frequently if he is to learn the meaning of, and be able to use, new words which he will encounter while reading any study-type material. The teacher should attempt to show students how helpful and interesting a book the dictionary really is. If a student learns to dislike the dictionary in class he will probably seldom use it outside the classroom.

Gray and Reese<sup>2</sup> sketch the development of vocabulary among students from the basic-sight-word period of learning at the primary grades through high school content fields pointing out that if the student has been properly introduced to vocal development the dictionary can be a source of help.

With respect to the matter of vocabulary building in the normal classroom situation, Durrell<sup>3</sup> indicates that there are three ways in which a student may learn new words: (1) by having the word explained by the teacher; (2) arriving at an adequate meaning for the word from context; and (3) by looking up the word in the dictionary.

Another aspect of reading improvement which is given much attention by reading authorities is, of course, comprehension. Dolch<sup>4</sup> believes that certain steps must be followed if improvement in reading

---

<sup>1</sup>Edward W. Dolch, A Manual For Remedial Reading (Champaign, Illinois: The Garrard Press, 1945), p. 302.

<sup>2</sup>Gray and Reese, op. cit., p. 439.

<sup>3</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improving Reading Instruction (New York: World Book Company, 1956), p. 255.

<sup>4</sup>Dolch, op. cit., p. 38.

comprehension is to be realized by the student. He suggests that comprehension may be improved by: (1) starting the student on easy material that he can readily understand; (2) helping him learn to repeat the meaning of what he has read; (3) placing some emphasis on the ability to retell the essentials of what has been read; and (4) providing work in regular textbook material as comprehension skills develop.

Leaders in the field of reading are generally agreed upon the need for grouping on the basis of levels of achievement if reading improvement is to be effective.

Kottmeyer says:

We may reiterate that reading development among children can take place when, among other reasonable practices, reading materials and reading activities are adjusted to the levels of achievement at which children actually are. In view of the common experience of finding a reading achievement range of at least ten years at the eighth-grade level, teachers will do well to abandon traditional notions of what they may expect in achievement from a given group of "graded" pupils.<sup>1</sup>

Speed of reading varies so much with the type of reading being done that most authorities do not advocate drills for increasing speed alone, but rather, emphasize comprehension first and assume that, under normal circumstances, speed will increase as comprehension increases. Gray and Reese<sup>2</sup> write that a teacher should avoid trying to increase speed of reading by reducing comprehension. The primary purpose of reading is to get meaning from the content read.

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<sup>1</sup>William Kottmeyer, Handbook for Remedial Reading (St. Louis, Missouri: Webster Publishing Company, 1947), p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Gray and Reese, op. cit., p. 459.

McCullough and Strang<sup>1</sup> state that if certain physical defects are corrected, vocabulary increases; and if effective methods of comprehension are taught, then one may reasonably expect an increase in speed appropriate to the material and purpose of reader.

---

<sup>1</sup>Constance M. McCullough and Ruth M. Strang, Problems in the Improvement of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1946).

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

The reading comprehension improvement materials with which this study is primarily concerned are the Practice Readers Books 3 and 4, by C. R. Stone, C. C. Grover and S. Phillips<sup>1</sup>, published by the Webster Publishing Company. These authors introduce the teacher to the Practice Readers with the following statement:

There is an abundance of evidence from carefully controlled teaching experiments to show that comprehension and specific phases of comprehension in study, or work-type, reading can be greatly improved by the use of carefully prepared practice materials.<sup>2</sup>

The Practice Readers are a series of four paper-covered booklets of 182 pages each. These readers are carefully graded for use in grades 3 through 8. The two readers used in this study were Book 3 (for grades 5-6) and Book 4 (for grades 6-8). The use of two levels of books was necessary because of the wide range of reading achievement levels existing among the members of the seventh and eighth grade students included in the group for study. The main purpose for using this series is the development of skills basic to effective study-reading. The content of the Practice Readers is informative and contains material related to social studies, nature, science, character development, safety, and health.

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Stone and C. C. Grover, Practice Readers Books 3 and 4 (New York: The Webster Publishing Company, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>C. R. Stone and C. C. Grover, op. cit., p. 1.

The seven skills developed by these readers are as follows:

1. Giving direct details. (Answer stated definitely in the reading matter.)
2. Giving implied details. (Answer inferred in reading matter but not directly stated.)
3. Giving meaning of the whole selection. (Answer involves meaning or impression of the whole selection rather than merely a part or detail.)
4. Determining whether a given idea is stated affirmatively, negatively, or not at all. (Answer must be based on statements in the reading material and must not be supplemented by pupil's own knowledge.)
5. Giving reference by selecting the word or words referred to by a given word, such as they, some, who, smallest, those, this, each, one, it, which.
6. Selecting statements not true according to the reading matter. (Again answer must be determined using only the information contained in the reading.)
7. Selecting words from the reading matter similar in meaning to those listed in the questions. (Answers involve understanding the meaning of certain of the more difficult words appearing in the page of reading matter.)

In connection with the reading and recording of responses and in connection with the checking, discussion, and verification immediately following, various other skills involved in study-reading are developed. In getting correct responses and in the group discussion,

the pupil gets much practice in locating items of information related to a problem, in selecting sentences relevant to a point or a statement, in discriminating between exactness of comprehension and slipshod reading, and in sensing the organization of the reading material.

On the question pages throughout the series, various types of responses commonly used in study-reading and in school tests are used, including the following: (1) questions answered by word or words to be selected from the reading matter; (2) completion of sentences by words selected from the reading matter; (3) answer to be selected from several listed (multiple choice); and (4) two false statements to be selected from the five listed.

The pupils record their responses on special answer sheets, see Figure 1, page 10. The student writes his answers to the six questions in each selection in the appropriate space, and after the items have been checked, the number of correct responses is recorded for each exercise. When all nine tests, which make up a unit, are completed, the summary at the bottom of the page is filled out. The sample answer sheet in Figure 1 shows that the total number right by tests is 42. The number of possible correct answers is, of course, 54. This total appears in graphic form, see Figure 2, page 11, which shows individual progress made in total number of correct answers for the nine units in the booklet.

A summary of the number of correct answers by question is also kept by the student. This appears in the bottom right-hand corner of the answer sheet, see Figure 3, page 12. This total must be the same as the total for the number-right-by-test summary. Figure 3 shows a

II

Answers	Answers	Answers
1. <i>one-third</i>	1. <i>six inches</i>	1. <i>germs</i>
2. <i>c</i> ✓	2. <i>6</i>	2. <i>c</i> ✓
3. <i>d</i>	3. <i>6</i> ✓	3. <i>6</i>
4. <i>6</i>	4. <i>c</i>	4. <i>6</i>
5. <i>people</i>	5. <i>larger turtle</i>	5. <i>flies</i>
6. <i>6 c</i> ✓	6. <i>a d</i>	6. <i>a d</i>
① No. Right <i>4</i>	② No. Right <i>5</i>	③ No. Right <i>5</i>
1. <i>clever</i>	1. <i>plant food</i>	1. <i>dark</i> ✓
2. <i>c</i>	2. <i>d</i>	2. <i>b</i> ✓
3. <i>a</i>	3. <i>a</i>	3. <i>d</i>
4. <i>6</i>	4. <i>6</i> ✓	4. <i>c</i>
5. <i>insects</i>	5. <i>gardens</i>	5. <i>gorillas</i>
6. <i>d c</i>	6. <i>6 d</i>	6. <i>a c</i>
④ No. Right <i>6</i>	⑤ No. Right <i>5</i>	⑥ No. Right <i>4</i>

This page and the next show a sample answer record sheet for Practice Readers.

III

Answers	Answers	Answers
1. <i>California</i>	1. <i>fifty</i> ✓	1. <i>metal</i> ✓
2. <i>c</i> ✓	2. <i>a</i>	2. <i>c</i>
3. <i>6</i>	3. <i>6</i>	3. <i>c</i>
4. <i>a</i>	4. <i>6</i> ✓	4. <i>c</i>
5. <i>lens</i>	5. <i>things</i>	5. <i>bobby</i>
6. <i>a 6</i> ✓	6. <i>6 c</i>	6. <i>6 c</i>
⑦ No. Right <i>4</i>	⑧ No. Right <i>4</i>	⑨ No. Right <i>5</i>

No. Right by Tests

1. <i>4</i>	6. <i>4</i>
2. <i>5</i>	7. <i>4</i>
3. <i>5</i>	8. <i>4</i>
4. <i>6</i>	9. <i>5</i>
5. <i>5</i>	

Total *42*

Questions No. 1: No. Right *6*

Questions No. 2: No. Right *5*

Questions No. 3: No. Right *8*

Questions No. 4: No. Right *7*

Questions No. 5: No. Right *9*

Questions No. 6: No. Right *7*

Total No. Right *42*

FIGURE 1



After the number for the total at the bottom of the answer sheet for Unit A has been filled in, make a dot on the A line of the chart below to show this total. After the answer sheet for Unit B has been completed, make a dot on line B to show the total score for Unit B. Then connect the two dots with a straight line. Add to this chart record upon completing each answer sheet. Watch your progress from unit to unit. Try to make your line go up from unit to unit.

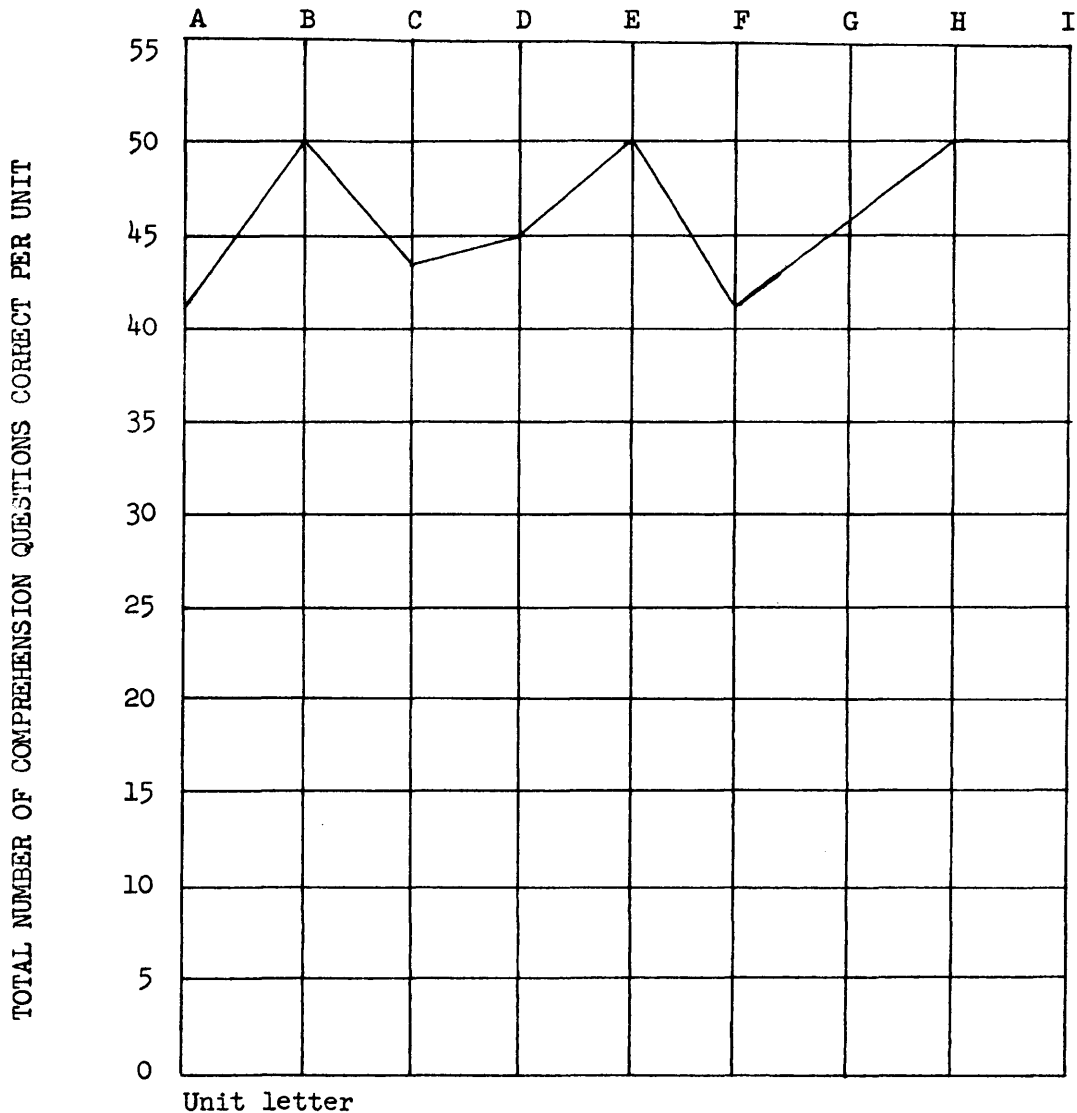


FIGURE 2

GENERAL PROGRESS RECORD SHOWING TOTAL SCORE ON EACH UNIT

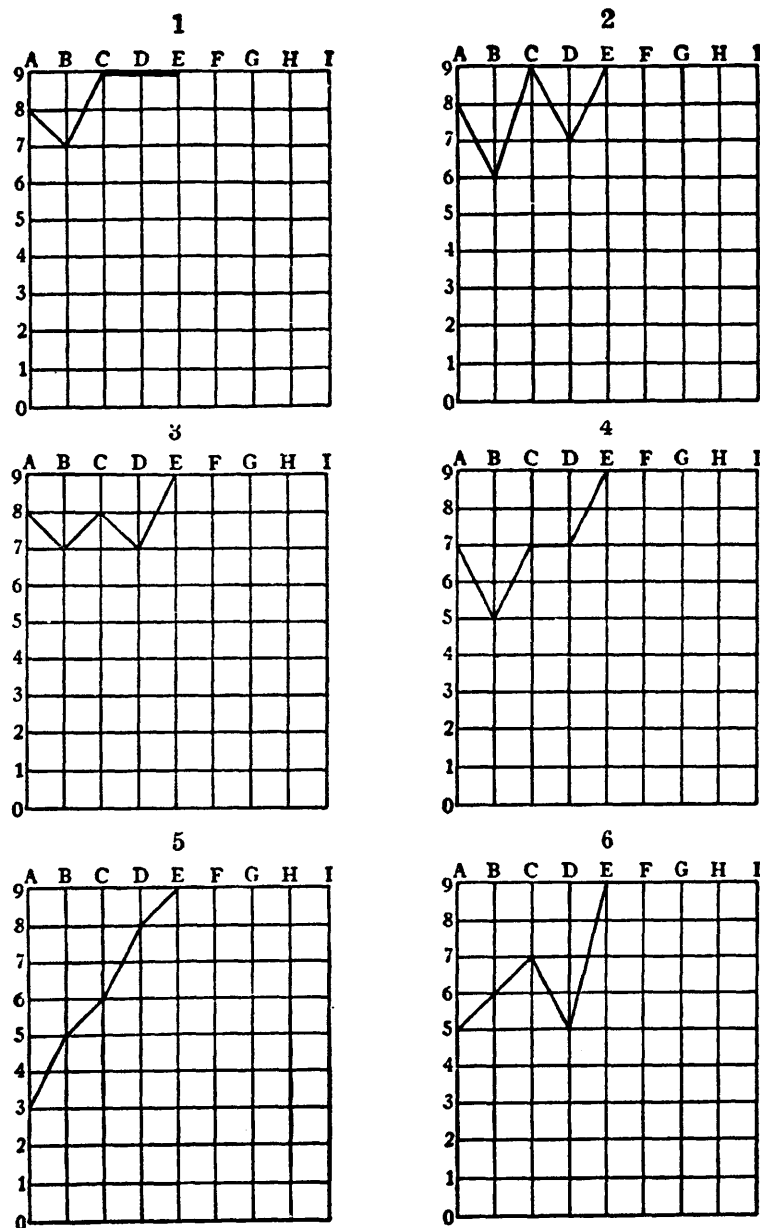


FIG. 2. Diagnostic Charts Showing Level of Achievement and Progress in Each of the Six Skills Exercised in Books II and III of *Practice Readers*. After a high degree of accuracy is reached on all six elements, the diagnostic charts are no longer needed. Note that this child was weakest on 5 and 6 at the beginning but improved rapidly.

FIGURE 3

PROGRESS RECORD FOR EACH OF THE SIX QUESTIONS

diagnostic chart of an actual case. This chart shows the level of achievement and progress in each of the six comprehension skills developed by the practice readers. It will be noticed that the pupil whose scores are recorded did poorest on questions one and six, but improved steadily.

Every pupil in the class kept a record of his progress in graph form, using the graphs represented by Figures 1, 2, and 4. Figure 4, page 14, is the daily progress graph kept by each pupil. The Y axis shows the number of correct answers. The X axis shows the letter-number of each daily exercise. Although there is considerable fluctuation in scores from day to day, a general improvement in scores was evident in almost all cases.

In order for the student to realize success with the early exercises in the practice readers, he must be started with a level of comprehension in keeping with his achievement plane. Since there were two grades in the class, two books were used: Book 3 for the slower group, and Book 4 for the faster group. In the Practice Readers, the vocabulary, with a few exceptions, has been kept one grade below the grade for which the book is recommended for use in average classes, and the nature of the content and the sentence structure have been kept sufficiently simple.

As an aid for reading readiness, to stimulate interest in the reading, each Practice Reader devotes the first page of each unit to illustrations. See Figure 5, page 15. These are designed to familiarize the pupils with the concepts and the vocabulary of the exercises of each unit.

As a part of each reading class period, a vocabulary-building

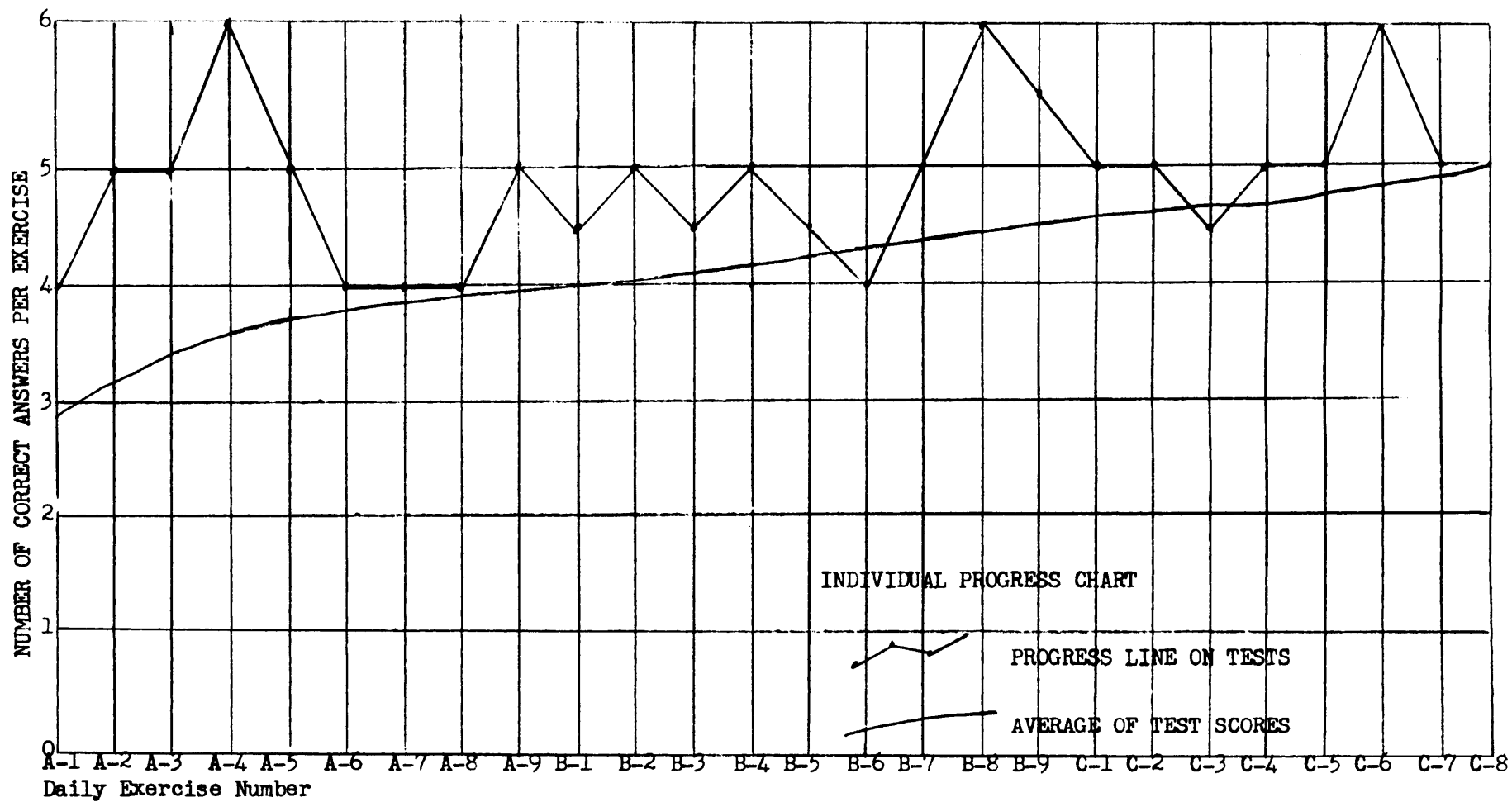
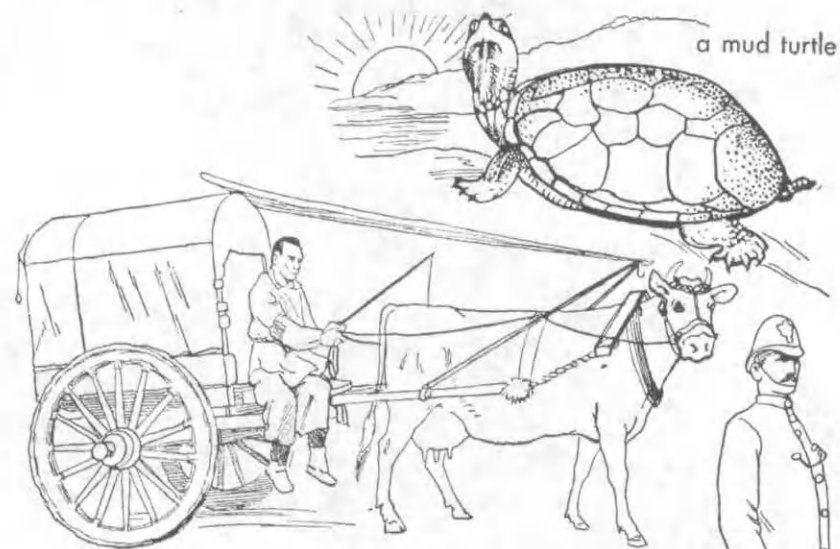


FIGURE 4  
INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS CHART

# Picture Helpers for Unit A



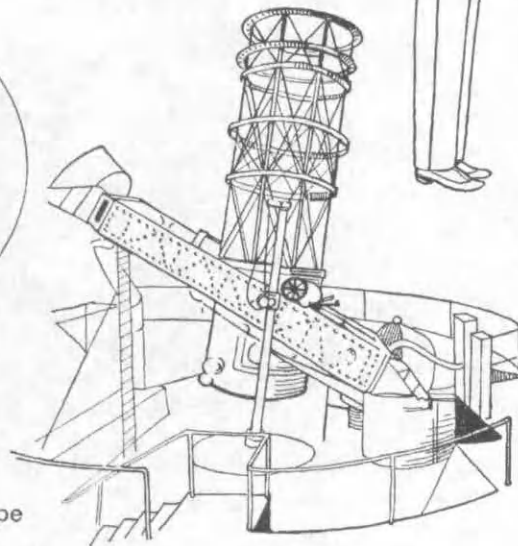
a mud turtle

a Chinese cart

an English bobby

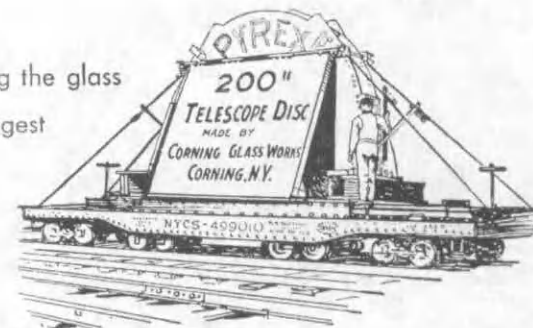


the fly's foot



a telescope

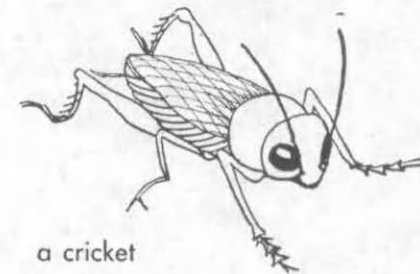
transporting the glass  
for the biggest  
telescope



a gorilla



a boy with recommendations



a cricket

FIGURE 5

ORIENTATION PICTURES FOR UNIT A

exercise was utilized. The materials used in this phase of the reading improvement program were the Dynamic Vocabulary Exercises, by W. J. Osburn.<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, page 38. These Dynamic Vocabulary Exercises are made up of words taken from the Thorndyke List of 10,000. These exercises are based upon learning the relationships between words such as: subject-verb, verb-object, adjective-noun, synonyms-antonyms, genus-species, part-whole, implication and other relationships. Groups of five words are presented in which there is one word that does not belong with the other four. The student is asked to pick out the word that does not belong with the others and to tell why the other four words do belong together.

Vocabulary lists are available for all grades and vary in difficulty from easier to more difficult words as the student progresses through the list for his level. In addition to crossing out the incorrect word in the series, each student is asked to explain why the other words belong together. See Figure 6, page 17.

Reports on the use of Dynamic Vocabulary Exercises indicates that improvement has been achieved with different groups of students as measured by achievement tests. The use of these exercises entails the use of dictionaries as well as giving practice in spelling and writing, if desired. If the student is given material designed for use at his achievement level, and permitted to progress without excessive pressure from the teacher, these exercises provide strong motivation for learning new words. Boredom is avoided by keeping the

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<sup>1</sup>W. J. Osburn, Dynamic Exercises in Vocabulary. Seattle, Washington, A. S. U. W. Bookstore.

# DYNAMIC VOCABULARY EXERCISES MANUAL

The following sample exercises show how these exercises are to be used. The reasons which the children give have proved to be more important than the mere crossing out of one word. Any logical reason is to be counted as correct.

## SAMPLE EXERCISES

### 1. Opposite

large      ~~good~~      high      small      low  
Good is crossed out because large is an antonym (opposite) of small, and high is an antonym of low.

### 2. Synonyms

odd      insane      queer      crazy      ~~erect~~  
Queer is a synonym of odd, and insane is a synonym of crazy; hence erect does not belong here.

### 3. Classification

~~sugar~~      lion      tiger      deer      bear  
Sugar does not belong here because all the other words are names of animals.

### 4. Function

bluing      shirt      anchor      ship      ~~freed~~  
Freed does not belong here because bluing is used on shirts and anchors are used on ships.

### 5. Genus-species

flask      amber      vessel      resin      ~~companion~~  
Flask is a kind of vessel and amber is a kind of resin; so companion does not belong here.

### 6. Part-whole

battery      troop      cell      soldier      ~~dry goods~~  
Dry goods is crossed out because a cell is part of a battery, and a soldier is part of a troop.

### 7. Complication

voters      ~~connection~~      votes      appetite      health  
Votes implies voters and appetite implies health; so connection does not belong here.

### 8. Mixed sentence

water      ~~kind~~      of      lots      drink  
Kind does not belong here because drink lots of water makes a sentence. Kind is not needed.

### 9. Subject-verb

pigs      ships      ~~distress~~      squeal      land  
Pigs squeal and ships land; so distress does not belong here.

10. Verb-object  
display ~~assassination~~ actor emblem feature  
We may display an emblem and feature an actor; assassination is not needed here.
11. Adjective-noun  
costume leather silk ~~custom~~ black  
We may have a black leather and a silk costume; so custom does not belong here.
12. Verb-adverb  
look ~~sugar~~ run well fast  
You can look well, and run fast; therefore, sugar does not belong here.
13. Materials  
bag paper ~~weed~~  
A bag may be made out of paper, but not out of weed.

#### HOW TO GRADE A PUPIL'S PAPER

Give full credit for all logical reasons, regardless of misspellings. A list of the misspellings may be kept for later study as a spelling exercise.

FIGURE 6



number of exercises covered in any class period to a minimum, and by injecting oral discussions of the words studied.

The tests used to measure progress of the group were Forms J, L, and M of the Stanford Achievement Test, Advanced Battery, designed for use in grades 6, 7, and 8.<sup>1</sup> These tests measure achievement in 9 areas of general school work. Each test yields a battery median score which will be used to compare the improvement before and after the experimental period of three months. The reading scores on the first test form a basis for assigning the pupil to the Practice Reader designed for his particular achievement level. This procedure is also followed in providing the Dynamic Vocabulary Exercise material that is most nearly suited to the grade level of the pupil.

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<sup>1</sup>Truman L. Kelley, Richard Maddes, et. al., Stanford Achievement Test (New York: World Books Company, 1952).

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of a special reading improvement program during a three month period. The object was to compare its effect with the reading improvement obtained from a normal procedure or regular developmental-type reading instruction program carried on over the seven months just previous to the initiation of the special reading program. The reading instruction given during this non-experimental period (from March 18, 1957 to January 21, 1958, excluding three summer months) consisted of the reading of two literature texts for each grade. These texts are designated as level one and level two which differentiates between the two in relation to reading difficulty. The procedure followed in the reading class during this period consisted of reading a selection in the text. A general discussion of the selection was held. Some of the poorer students used a reading skills review exercise booklet during this non-experimental period, which gave practice in basic reading skills. No particular emphasis was placed upon vocabulary building or comprehension improvement during this period.

The results of the Stanford Achievement Test, Form M, which was given to this class March 18, 1957, are shown on Table I, page 21. It will be noted that the average battery median score was 7.5 for the class on this test. The average reading median score was 7.8.

These results were compared with the median scores obtained by this class on the Stanford Achievement Test, Form J, which was given January 21, 1958, see Table II, page 22. This test yielded an average battery median score of 7.9 and an average reading median score of 7.9. Thus, during the seven month non-experimental period, we see that the

TABLE I

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES OF THE EXPERIMENTAL CLASS FOR MARCH 18, 1957

COLUMN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
PUPIL	PAR. MEAN.	WORD MEAN.	AVER. READ.	SPELL.	LANG.	ARITH. REAS.	ARITH. COMP.	SOC. STUD.	SCI.	STUD. SKI.	BATT. MDN.
1	6.0	6.9	6.5	7.0	9.4	7.6	8.1	7.2	10.1	7.2	7.0
2	7.3	8.2	7.8	7.1	9.5	8.5	7.5	6.5	7.4	8.3	7.5
3	10.2	9.7	9.9	8.0	9.6	9.5	8.8	8.3	6.4	5.9	8.8
4	7.6	8.2	7.9	7.1	8.0	7.3	5.6	7.5	10.2	6.9	7.5
5	10.7	9.4	10.5	7.5	10.2	9.9	7.4	10.4	11.6	10.1	9.9
6	5.7	8.0	6.4	7.7	7.5	10.5	9.5	7.8	9.5	10.1	8.0
7	4.0	6.2	5.1	7.0	4.4	6.0	4.8	5.0	4.9	4.1	5.0
8	9.2	8.9	9.1	5.1	4.3	7.8	6.6	10.4	10.5	8.0	8.0
9	8.6	7.5	8.2	8.0	5.1	7.4	7.5	7.8	8.9	6.9	7.5
10	6.5	7.3	6.9	9.6	11.9	8.6	8.3	8.1	7.9	9.7	8.3
11	6.0	7.0	6.5	6.9	6.2	8.9	8.8	5.9	5.9	5.7	6.0
12	4.9	5.8	5.4	6.0	5.3	4.5	5.6	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6
13	9.8	9.1	9.4	8.1	9.6	6.3	7.2	10.8	9.9	8.8	9.1
14	9.2	7.9	8.9	10.5	8.7	6.7	6.8	6.7	10.2	8.6	8.6
15	6.8	9.4	8.1	8.1	9.2	10.8	7.0	7.6	7.0	8.4	8.1
16	7.9	8.9	8.4	6.8	8.4	8.6	9.3	6.3	8.9	8.4	8.4
17	8.3	8.3	8.3	6.5	10.2	10.5	9.5	10.2	12.2	10.5	10.2
18	8.3	8.6	8.4	7.7	10.6	9.5	9.3	8.3	9.9	10.5	9.3
19	7.5	7.0	7.2	9.3	8.8	9.9	9.5	8.8	5.6	9.2	8.8
20	6.0	6.6	6.3	8.0	6.5	8.4	8.0	5.7	6.4	7.2	6.6
21	7.5	8.0	7.8	7.2	5.8	8.1	8.1	6.9	8.6	7.6	7.6
22	4.0	6.8	5.8	6.0	7.9	5.7	5.6	5.3	5.3	5.9	5.9
23	9.2	9.1	9.1	8.6	9.6	6.5	7.2	6.3	6.7	5.7	7.2
24	6.4	6.6	6.5	7.4	7.0	6.7	7.0	6.4	6.8	6.0	6.7
25	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	4.1	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.5	7.7	5.5
26	7.9	8.3	8.1	9.0	6.1	7.6	8.0	8.5	8.9	8.6	8.1
27	4.5	4.4	4.4	7.1	4.3	5.2	7.6	5.5	5.3	4.5	5.2
28	6.5	6.5	6.5	5.4	8.3	7.1	6.1	4.6	7.8	6.4	6.5
29	5.3	5.0	5.2	5.6	3.3	8.1	8.1	7.0	5.3	5.4	5.4
30	10.2	8.4	9.3	7.1	10.8	9.7	7.9	8.3	11.2	9.7	9.2
MEDIANS	7.5	7.9	7.8	7.1	8.0	8.1	7.5	7.0	7.8	7.6	7.5

TABLE II

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES OF THE EXPERIMENTAL CLASS FOR JANUARY 21, 1958

COLUMN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
PUPIL	PAR. MEAN.	WORD MEAN.	AVER. READ.	SPELL.	LANG.	ARITH. REAS.	ARITH. COMP.	SOC. STUD.	SCI.	STUD. SKI.	BATT. MDN.
1	6.2	7.3	6.2	7.3	6.0	9.8	8.1	7.5	7.3	5.6	7.3
2	7.3	8.6	7.9	10.0	10.0	9.2	7.6	7.3	7.1	5.8	7.6
3	10.1	8.8	9.4	8.9	8.2	7.9	8.4	9.4	9.4	7.1	8.4
4	9.7	8.8	9.2	8.0	6.9	8.1	7.4	10.2	8.7	6.8	8.1
5	7.0	9.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	7.5	7.0	9.4	9.4	7.4	8.0
6	8.0	7.5	7.7	7.7	7.2	9.2	11.7	8.9	9.8	10.1	8.9
7	4.6	6.2	5.4	8.1	4.1	4.8	6.7	6.2	5.0	4.6	5.0
8	8.3	11.0	9.6	6.8	7.6	8.5	7.3	10.7	9.1	7.5	8.3
9	7.2	8.8	8.0	7.9	7.4	7.9	7.5	10.9	9.5	5.4	7.9
10	7.0	7.9	7.4	10.7	7.6	9.2	7.6	9.7	8.1	8.5	8.1
11	8.0	7.1	7.5	7.7	8.2	8.1	7.6	9.7	7.3	8.5	8.0
12	6.4	5.0	5.7	6.1	1.2	4.6	4.7	5.5	6.3	4.4	5.0
13	10.1	9.7	9.9	8.0	8.5	9.1	8.0	10.3	11.4	9.4	9.4
14	10.5	9.0	9.2	11.3	8.8	9.1	8.7	8.9	10.5	9.8	9.1
15	8.4	10.1	9.2	9.6	12.3	8.9	8.6	8.6	10.1	9.4	9.4
16	7.0	8.2	7.6	8.7	6.6	9.8	9.2	7.5	7.9	6.0	7.9
17	9.7	9.6	9.6	7.4	12.8	10.1	8.4	11.2	12.0	7.8	9.7
18	9.3	7.9	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.8	9.6	12.0	9.4	12.0	9.6
19	10.5	8.8	9.6	9.6	11.1	10.4	8.9	10.0	9.8	8.9	9.8
20	8.8	8.8	8.8	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.9	7.5	10.5	10.0	7.9
21	6.4	8.4	7.4	10.2	10.4	7.3	6.4	8.1	7.1	6.6	7.3
22	9.7	9.9	9.8	10.5	11.2	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.6	6.8	7.6
23	7.0	6.9	6.9	8.9	7.6	7.7	8.6	6.0	5.4	6.0	7.0
24	6.7	7.7	7.2	7.6	3.7	8.7	8.0	6.1	6.7	6.7	6.7
25	5.9	5.3	5.6	5.2	5.2	6.7	6.9	6.0	8.1	7.4	6.0
26	9.3	9.0	9.1	8.4	4.5	8.6	7.4	7.3	9.1	7.4	8.4
27	6.4	6.7	6.5	7.3	7.6	5.2	6.9	7.5	5.6	5.4	6.7
28	7.0	6.4	6.7	4.3	7.6	7.7	6.9	4.4	7.1	4.6	6.9
29	5.7	7.7	6.7	5.5	7.2	7.1	7.4	8.3	6.6	6.1	7.1
30	11.1	8.8	9.9	7.0	9.9	7.3	8.6	10.0	10.5	8.1	8.8
MEDIANS	7.0	8.4	7.9	8.0	7.6	8.1	7.6	8.9	8.1	7.1	7.9

class increased .4 years in terms of the differences and .1 years in reading ability.

The class was divided, for reading purposes, by using the average reading scores obtained upon the test given January 21, 1958, at which time the experimental reading program was initiated. Those pupils who scores grade six or below on average reading achievement were started in Practice Reader Book 3, which is designed for use in grades 5 and 6. The students who scored above grade six were given Practice Reader Book 4 to use. Both books are organized in the same way and the six questions to be answered by the pupils are of the same relative type; therefore, the results made by students using both books were kept on the same graph.

During the three month experimental period, the class was given (1) from one to two exercises from the Practice Readers Books 3 and 4, and (2) one daily exercise (ten words per exercise) from the Dynamic Vocabulary Word Lists. The daily class period of fifty minutes was divided between these two activities. The reading exercise occupied approximately the first thirty minutes of each period.

A single Practice Reader exercise consisted of one page of reading material and a page of six questions. Figure 7, page 24, is the actual A-1 story page. Figure 8, page 25, is the actual question page for the A-1 story. Questions were answered as follows:

Questions numbered 1: After selecting the answer from among the four listed, its letter (a, b, c, or d) was written in the proper space on the answer sheet. The answer was not directly stated in the reading matter, but was a

## A-1

Chinese farms are so small that most American boys and girls would call them gardens. China is a very thickly settled country, with a large part of her people living on farms. As a result one third of the people who own farms have less than two acres. A farm of this size will support very few animals. Usually some chickens and a pig are all that will be found. Some farmers are able to keep a cow. These farmers think they are fortunate because the cow will pull the cart or the plow and also will furnish milk.

Many farms are too small, however, to support a work animal. Then the land must be cultivated with the spade, rake, and hoe and the seed planted by hand. Without machinery all of the family must work to raise a crop. Almost everything that is raised is eaten or used for fuel. With little to sell, the people can buy very little. When the floods come or when the crops are poor, many must starve because they are unable to save food from one year to the next.

TO THE TEACHER.—Before using this page see pages 182-185 and use the Preliminary Practice Test, pages 186-187.

FIGURE 7

**A-1**

1. What part of the owners of Chinese farms have less than two acres? \_\_\_\_.
2. Chinese farmers living on small farms are
  - (a) getting along fine.
  - (b) poor.
  - (c) dying very young.
  - (d) very fortunate.
3. Which is the best title for this story?
  - (a) Floods in China
  - (b) Helping the Chinese Farmer
  - (c) Chinese Schools
  - (d) Chinese Life on the Small Farm
4. On these small farms the crops are always good.
  - (a) yes
  - (b) no
  - (c) does not tell
5. The word *many* in the last sentence means many\_\_\_\_.
6. Which two sentences are not true?
  - (a) Many Chinese farms are small.
  - (b) There is very little waste on these small farms.
  - (c) These farms save ten percent each year to live on when the floods come.
  - (d) Only boys and men work on the small farms in China.
  - (e) A large part of Chinese people live on farms.

FIGURE 8

SAMPLE QUESTION PAGE FROM WEBSTER PRACTICE READER

BOOK 4

reasonable conclusion from ideas contained in the selection.

Questions numbered 2: After selecting the right expression from the four that were listed, its letter (a, b, c, or d) was written in the proper space on the answer sheet. The whole selection related to the correct expression.

Questions numbered 3: First, it had to be determined whether there was anything in the selection which directly or by implication was related to the statement. If not, the answer was (c). If there was a relationship, it had to be determined whether the statement was true or not true, and then yes or no was selected.

Questions numbered 4: In these questions there was a word printed in italics which referred to a word or expression in the reading matter that appeared previously. That word had to be located and written on the answer sheet.

Questions numbered 5: From the reading matter could be determined which two of the six sentences listed in this item were true. The two true sentences were identified on the answer sheet.

Questions numbered 6: The word which meant the same as the word printed in italics was located and written on the answer sheet.

An examination of these questions shows that the answers require careful reading of the selection and thought upon the part of the student. As was shown on page 7, in answering these questions, practice is given on skills essential to effective study-type reading.



As soon as the students finished reading the selection and had answered the six questions, they recorded the elapsed time in seconds. After twenty-eight of the thirty pupils in the class had completed the exercise, time was called and all work stopped. An oral discussion period followed, during which time the reasons for the correct answers were considered. If a student disagreed with any answer as given by the key, he was allowed to prove his point by making reference to particular sentences or statements in the text which were pertinent to the answer. Other pupils were permitted to defend correct answers in the same manner. This procedure added "life" to the class and helped locate students who were experiencing comprehension difficulties. As the program developed, students became more adept in supporting their statements by quoting passages from the reading exercises. This oral discussion period proved to be valuable to the students.

Before beginning exercise A-1 in the Practice Readers, a sample exercise was explained, read, and the questions answered and discussed. The class was then asked to study the picture helps for Unit A. See Figure 5, page 15. Exercise A-1 was then read by the class and the questions answered.

The remaining eight exercises in Unit A were completed as daily lessons. To record daily progress in these exercises, a chart like Figure 4, page 14, was kept by each pupil. To record general progress after the completion of each unit, a chart like Figure 2, page 11, was kept. To record progress on the six different types of comprehension development, a chart like Figure 3, page 12, was kept at the end of each unit.

A master record of class progress was kept by the teacher. Figure 9, page 29, shows that the average number of correct responses on Unit A was 27 for the group. This average increased to about 42 correct answers on the final unit (I).

The work with Dynamic Vocabulary Exercises occupied the final half of each class period. See Appendix A, page 38. The students were given material from these exercises and asked to follow the following procedure: (1) look up any word which they did not know and write the word and the meaning in a vocabulary notebook kept for this purpose; (2) cross out the word which does not belong with the other four; (3) write a sentence telling why the other four words are related using as a guide the illustrations on the instruction sheet. See Figure 6, pages 17 and 18. Each student finished a practice sheet as rapidly as his ability permitted. The teacher worked with the students who needed help on this exercise and permitted the better students to work independently. Each lesson consisted of forty to fifty words. The completed exercises were checked by the teacher and mistakes noted.

Table III, page 30, shows the scores made by the class on the Stanford Achievement Test, Form L, which was administered May 5, 1958, at the completion of the three month experimental test period. The average battery median score was found to be 8.7.

Table IV, page 31, shows the achievement distributions obtained for the three periods of testing and the corresponding averages and medians. It will be noted that during the seven month non-experimental period a median gain of .4 (7.9 - 7.5) and a mean gain of .38 (7.86 -

AVERAGE NUMBER CORRECT ANSWERS FOR THE GROUP PER UNIT

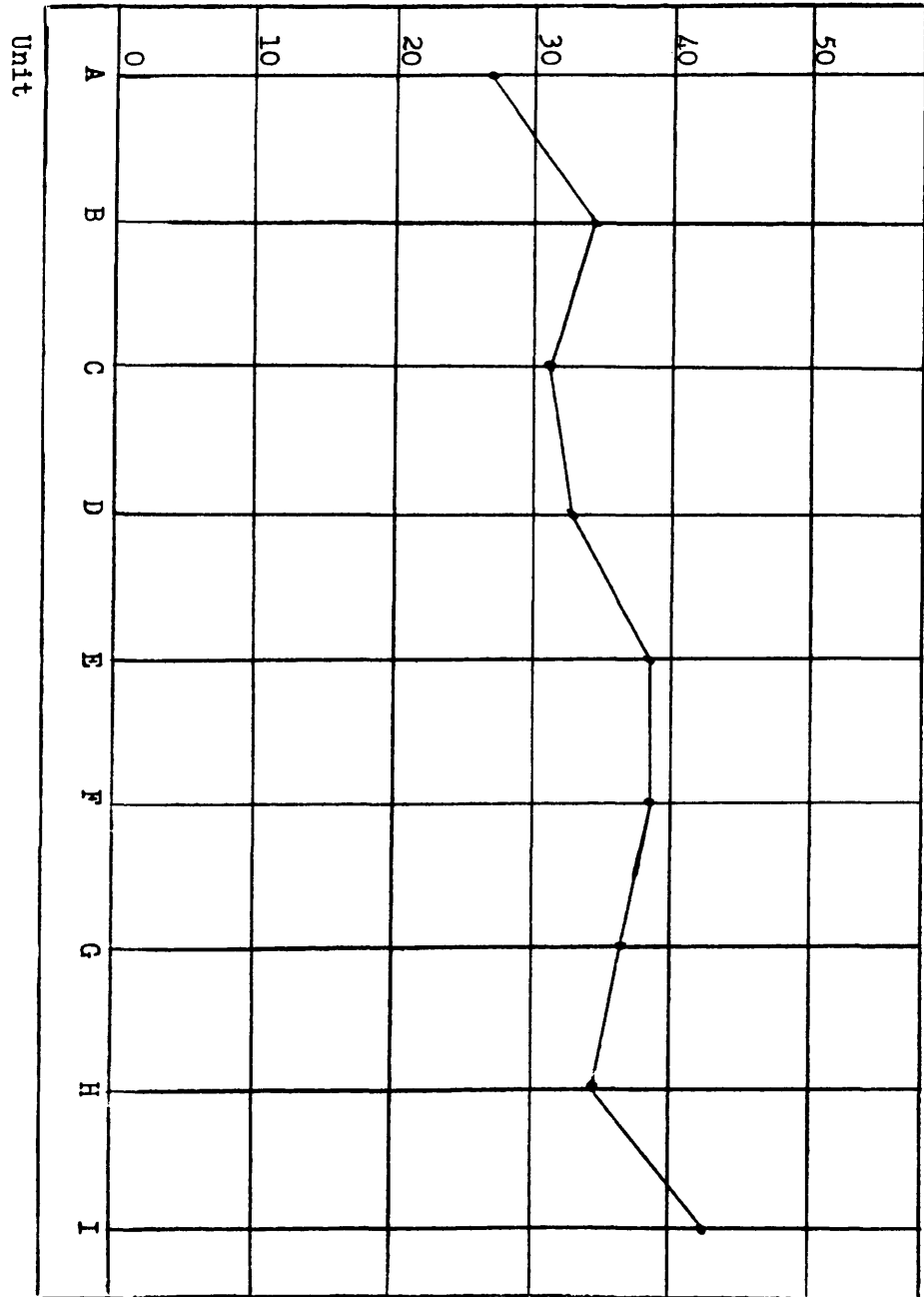


FIGURE 9

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CORRECT RESPONSES PER UNIT

TABLE III

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES OF THE EXPERIMENTAL CLASS FOR MAY 5, 1958

COLUMN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
PUPIL	PAR. MEAN.	WORD MEAN.	AVER. READ.	SPELL.	LANG.	ARITH. REAS.	ARITH. COMP.	SOC. STUD.	SCI.	STUD. SKI.	BATT. MDN.
1	6.2	7.5	6.8	9.3	8.5	10.1	11.1	9.2	7.8	11.2	9.2
2	7.2	9.0	8.1	9.7	9.3	9.7	9.3	8.6	10.1	9.8	9.3
3	10.1	9.3	9.6	9.3	10.0	10.7	11.1	9.5	10.5	8.1	10.0
4	10.1	9.3	9.6	9.3	9.3	10.4	7.3	9.5	11.1	8.9	9.3
5	9.2	11.4	10.3	8.4	7.9	9.7	8.0	9.8	9.1	8.5	9.1
6	8.3	8.8	8.5	8.7	10.0	12.6	10.7	8.3	10.1	10.5	10.0
7	4.3	6.7	5.1	7.7	4.9	6.3	7.3	6.0	5.3	4.9	6.0
8	10.8	10.4	10.6	6.3	7.4	9.2	7.4	10.6	9.1	6.4	9.1
9	10.1	9.0	9.5	10.0	5.2	7.5	7.8	8.6	10.9	7.1	8.6
10	8.3	8.8	8.5	11.3	6.3	10.4	10.1	8.1	10.1	7.8	8.8
11	9.2	8.3	8.7	7.6	8.2	9.5	9.0	8.1	8.7	8.9	8.7
12	4.6	6.0	5.3	7.7	4.5	5.5	5.7	5.7	7.8	5.8	5.7
13	10.5	11.3	10.9	7.5	10.8	7.1	6.9	10.0	11.2	8.9	10.0
14	9.7	9.6	9.6	10.0	11.4	8.1	7.4	7.7	9.8	9.8	9.7
15	8.7	10.0	9.3	9.0	11.9	10.4	10.7	9.2	10.9	7.8	10.0
16	7.9	8.3	8.1	8.4	7.4	9.1	9.3	8.3	9.4	8.9	8.4
17	9.6	9.7	9.6	8.7	12.2	11.0	10.1	12.0	12.1	7.8	10.1
18	10.1	8.3	9.2	7.9	10.0	11.0	9.3	10.1	9.4	10.1	10.0
19	10.5	9.9	10.2	10.1	11.0	9.9	9.6	10.2	10.1	9.8	10.1
20	11.3	9.0	10.1	8.1	8.2	8.5	8.2	8.1	9.1	7.2	8.2
21	8.3	9.7	9.5	8.3	6.6	7.6	7.3	7.1	9.4	7.2	7.6
22	10.9	9.3	10.1	10.2	8.2	6.4	5.9	7.1	7.8	6.3	7.8
23	6.0	7.1	6.5	8.6	7.2	9.4	9.3	5.6	5.8	7.2	7.2
24	6.7	6.9	6.8	7.8	7.2	7.1	7.8	6.4	5.8	6.2	6.9
25	6.2	5.6	5.9	5.8	7.4	5.9	6.1	7.1	10.1	8.1	6.2
26	8.3	8.5	8.4	9.7	6.3	7.9	8.7	8.6	9.1	7.8	8.5
27	6.0	6.0	6.0	8.0	7.2	6.4	7.9	6.5	7.5	6.7	6.7
28	6.0	5.6	5.8	3.5	7.5	8.7	6.6	4.7	8.1	5.2	6.0
29	6.0	5.6	5.8	5.8	6.0	7.2	7.5	6.7	8.4	6.7	6.7
30	7.2	9.3	8.2	8.3	9.3	7.9	8.0	11.2	11.8	7.5	8.3
MEDIANS	8.3	8.8	8.5	8.3	7.9	8.5	8.0	8.3	9.4	7.8	8.7

TABLE IV

A COMPARISON OF INDIVIDUAL MEDIAN SCORES ON STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT

TESTS FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

COLUMN	1st test		
	March, 1957	January, 1958	April, 1958
PUPIL	FIRST GRADE LEVEL	SECOND TEST	THIRD TEST
1	7.0	7.3	9.2
2	7.5	7.6	9.3
3	8.8	8.4	10.0
4	7.5	8.1	9.3
5	9.9	8.0	9.1
6	8.0	8.9	10.0
7	5.0	5.0	6.0
8	8.0	8.3	9.1
9	7.5	7.9	8.6
10	8.3	8.1	8.8
11	6.0	8.0	8.7
12	4.6	5.0	5.7
13	9.1	9.4	10.0
14	8.6	9.1	9.7
15	8.1	9.4	10.0
16	8.4	7.9	8.4
17	10.2	9.7	10.1
18	9.3	9.7	10.0
19	8.8	9.8	10.1
20	6.6	7.9	8.2
21	7.6	7.3	7.6
22	5.9	7.6	7.8
23	7.2	7.0	7.2
24	6.7	6.7	6.9
25	5.5	6.0	6.2
26	8.1	8.4	8.5
27	5.2	6.7	6.7
28	6.5	6.9	6.0
29	5.4	7.1	6.7
30	9.2	8.8	8.3
MDNS.	7.5	7.9	8.7
MEANS	7.48	7.86	8.74

7.48) were obtained. During the three month experimental period the median gain was .8 (8.7 - 7.9) and the mean gain was .88 (8.74 - 7.86). Hence the indications were that during the three month experimental period the gain was approximately twice that obtained over the seven month non-experimental period.

Table V, below, reveals that the median gain during the seven month non-experimental period in average reading score was .1 (7.8 - 7.9).

TABLE V

<u>TESTS</u>	<u>AVERAGE READING MEDIAN SCORE (Gr. levels)</u>
TEST I, March, 1957 . . . . .	7.8
TEST II, January, 1958 . . . . .	7.9
TEST III, May, 1958 . . . . .	8.5
NON-EXPERIMENTAL GAIN . . . . .	.1
EXPERIMENTAL GAIN . . . . .	.6

The gain during the three month experimental period in average reading score was .6 (7.9 - 8.5). This suggests that the experimental group gain in reading achievement could be attributed to the special reading instruction they received during the experimental period.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUDING STATEMENT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary. This study described a program of reading improvement for the seventh and eighth grade class at the Arlee Elementary School in Arlee, Montana, during the 1957-58 school year.

The reading improvement program included: (1) daily exercises from the Practice Reader Book 3 and 4; (2) daily exercises from the Dynamic Vocabulary Exercises. Three forms of a standardized achievement test were administered to the class under study to measure the effectiveness of this program. An examination of the data on Table IV, page 31, showed that since there was a total battery median gain of .4 grade levels (7.9 - 7.5) and a total battery average gain of .38 during the seven month non-experimental period, and a total battery median gain of .8 grade levels (8.7 - 7.9) and a total battery mean gain of .88 grade levels (8.74 - 7.86) over the three month experimental period that the worth of the special reading improvement program is indicated.

Table V, page 32, indicates that since the gain in average reading median score during the seven month non-experimental period was .1 grade levels and the gain over the three month experimental period was .6 grade levels, the special program had a positive effect upon the reading achievement of the experimental group.

Concluding statement. Many reading improvement materials and devices exist today which emphasize the increase of speed of reading. This study attempted to provide reading comprehension materials that

place the emphasis upon developing skills needed to cope with the study-type reading that a student needs to employ in junior and senior high school subject-matter fields. Speed of reading was not given primary attention in this study. However, it was recognized as important by having students record the time required to both read an exercise and answer the accompanying questions.

The Webster Practice Readers were selected for use because they stress comprehension skills which are needed in reading in junior and high schools content fields.

The Dynamic Vocabulary exercises were used in conjunction with the Practice Readers, because such exercises develop comprehension and capacity for higher level reading.

Recommendations. In the opinion of the author, a reading improvement program would be most valuable if taught during a morning period, preferably the first period of the day. This would give students more opportunity to practice new-found reading skills in other subject content areas during the day. A reading improvement program should be a year-long project to achieve optimum results.

This type of program can be used on any class regardless of achievement level. On a brighter class whose achievement is high to begin with, speed of study-type-reading can be emphasized. On a slower and lower achieving group comprehension can be emphasized first and speed later.



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## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

DYNAMIC VOCABULARY EXERCISES MANUAL

The following sample exercises show how these exercises are to be used. The reasons which the children give have proved to be more important than the mere crossing out of one word. Any logical reason is to be counted as correct.

SAMPLE EXERCISES

1. Opposite  
large ~~good~~ high small low  
Good is crossed out because large is an antonym (opposite) of small, and high is an antonym of low.
2. Synonyms  
odd insane queer crazy ~~erect~~  
Queer is a synonym of odd, and insane is a synonym of crazy, hence erect does not belong here.
3. Classification  
~~sugar~~ lion tiger deer bear  
Sugar does not belong here because all the other words are names of animals.
4. Function  
bluing shirt anchor ship ~~freed~~  
Freed does not belong here because bluing is used on shirts and anchors are used on ships.
5. Genus-species  
flask amber vessel resin ~~companion~~  
Flask is a kind of vessel and amber is a kind of resin; so companion does not belong here.
6. Part-whole  
battery troop cell soldier ~~dry goods~~  
Dry goods is crossed out because a cell is part of a battery, and a soldier is part of a troop.
7. Implication  
voters ~~connection~~ votes appetite health  
Votes implies voters and appetite implies health; so connection does not belong here.
8. Mixed sentence  
water ~~kind~~ of lots drink  
Kind does not belong here because drink lots of water makes a sentence. Kind is not needed.

9. Subject-verb  
pigs ships ~~distress~~ squeal land  
Pigs squeal and ships land; so distress does not belong here.
10. Verb-object  
display ~~assassination~~ actor emblem feature  
We may display an emblem and feature an actor; assassination is not needed here.
11. Adjective-noun  
costume leather silk ~~custom~~ black  
We may have a black leather and a silk costume, so custom does not belong here.
12. Materials  
bag paper ~~weed~~  
A bag may be made out of paper but not out of weed.
13. Verb-adverb  
look ~~sugar~~ run well fast  
You can look well and run fast; therefore, sugar does not belong here.

#### HOW TO GRADE A PUPIL'S PAPER

Give full credit for all logical reasons, regardless of misspellings. A list of the misspellings may be kept for later study as a spelling exercise.

#### LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

- Level 1 - Correct thinking  
Crossing out the correct word but unable to give the reason orally. Credit as perfect on Level 1.
- Level 2 - Incomplete oral answers of the type:  
baboon badger ~~cocoon~~ bobolink falcon  
Cocoon is not an animal. Credit such answers as correct on Level 2.
- Level 3 - Complete oral answers. Cocoon is not an animal and the rest are. Credit as correct on Level 3.
- Level 4 - Answers as in Level 1 but written in incorrect form. Credit as correct on Level 4.
- Level 5 - Answers as in Level 3, but written in incorrect form. Credit as correct on Level 5.
- Level 6 - Complete written exercises in correct form. Give no credit on any level for answers like "Because cocoon is not a bobolink", which omit part of the words. There is a wide gap of difficulty between oral and written.